as well shift from the strategic games of high art to those real rituals of participation within which mass culture contains and controls its audiences.

This dialogic relationship of the Dance Diagram paintings with Kaprow's essay and the status of participatory aesthetics was made even more explicit in Warhol's rather peculiar decision to present these paintings in their first public installation horizontally, on the floor, making the display an essential element of the painting's reading. Simulating the function of actual diagrams for dance lessons, the installation on the floor not only emphasized the facetious invitation to the viewer to participate in a trivial ritual of mass culture, but literally parodied the position of the painting in Jackson Pollock's working procedure on the floor of the studio, as it had been described in Harold Rosenberg's famous essay "The American Action Painters" of 1952 (which reverberated through Kaprow's text as well): "At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or 'express' an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event... The image would be the result of this encounter." 

The destruction of Pollock's painterly legacy and the critique of aesthetic experience as participatory ritual would resurface in Warhol's work once again almost twenty years later. Precisely at the moment of the rise of Neo-Expressionism Warhol delivered one of his last coups to an increasingly voracious high-culture industry desperately trying to revitalize the expressionist paradigm and its failed promises. His series of Oxidation paintings of 1978 (plates 376–379), whose monochrome surfaces were coated with metallic paint striated and spotted with the expressively gestural oxidizing marks of urination onto the canvas, brought full circle the critique begun in the Dance Diagrams.

THE MONOCHROME

The Dance Diagrams of 1962 contain two other important aspects of Warhol's art, which, along with serial-grid composition, became the central strategies of Warhol's entire painterly production: mechanically reproduced ready-made imagery and monochromatic color schemes.

Warhol's adoption of the modernist tradition of monochrome painting, frequently concealed in metallic monochrome sections of paintings or blatant in separate panels (the "blanks," as he called them with typically derogatory understatement), aligns his painterly work of the early sixties in yet another way with some of the key issues emerging from New York School painting at that time.

Pollock had included industrial aluminum paint in key paintings such as Lavender Mist (Number 1), 1950, or White Light, 1954 (figure 13). The material's industrial derivation had generated a scandal, while its light reflectivity concretized the viewer's optical relationship to the paint in an almost mechanical manner. Warhol deployed the same industrial enamel, and his use of aluminum paint was only the beginning of a long involvement with "immateriality," both of light reflectivity and of the "empty" monochrome surface. Evolving from the various stages of gold Marilyns in 1962, followed by the series of silver Elvises and numerous other images silkscreened on silver throughout 1963–64 (such as Silver Marion and Tuna Fish Disaster [plates 233, 269, 270]), Warhol produced the first diptych paintings with large monochrome panels in 1963 (Mustard Race Riot [plate 277] and Blue Electric Chair [plate 284]), the first monochrome metallic dip-
nychs in 1964 (Round Jackie, plates 245, 246), and the silver Liz diptych in 1965. As was the case with the Dance Diagrams and the Do It Yourself paintings, the monochrome diptychs completely devalued and inverted one of modernism’s most sacred pictorial strategies, the empty space, originating in Symbolist sources. Upon its appearance in twentieth-century art it had been hailed by Wassily Kandinsky in the following terms: “I always find it advantageous in each work to leave an empty space; it has to do with not imposing. Don’t you think that in this there rests an eternal law—but it’s a law for tomorrow.”

That “empty space,” as Kandinsky’s statement clearly indicates, was yet another strategy negating aesthetic imposition, functioning as a spatial suture allowing the viewer a relationship of mutual interdependence with the “open” artistic construct. The empty space functioned equally as a space of hermetic resistance, rejecting ideological meaning assigned to painting as well as the false comforts of convenient readings. It was certainly with those aspirations that the monochrome strategy had been utilized by Newman and Reinhardt throughout the fifties and early sixties. Their monochrome paintings were imbued with a notion of transcendentalism, reminiscent of the Symbolist origins of the monochrome strategy. On the other hand, like other modernist strategies of reduction, the monochrome inadvertently turned into triviality, either as the result of incompetent execution of such a device of apparently supreme simplicity, or of merely exhausting the strategy by endless repetition, or as an effect of artists’ and viewers’ growing doubts about a strategy whose promises had become increasingly incompatible with its material objects and their functions.

The process of critical re-evaluation of the monochrome tradition had begun once again in the American context in Rauschenberg’s early 1951 White Paintings and would find its climax (along with the official termination of Warhol’s painterly production) in the Silver Clouds—identified by Warhol as “paintings”—silver pillows inflated with helium, floating through (and supposedly out of) the Leo Castelli Gallery in 1966 (plate 302). Shortly before, Warhol announced publicly that he had abandoned painting once and for all, which would seem to have led him to Kaprow’s envisioned “action,” except that he, typically, refrained from it. Warhol’s more skeptical evaluation of the options available for cultural practice would prove Kaprow’s prophecies once again to be falsely optimistic.

Thus the monochrome field and the light-reflective surface, seemingly emptied of all manufactured visual incident, had become one of the central concerns of the neo-avant-garde artists of the early to mid-fifties. This was evident not only in Rauschenberg’s work but equally in the work of Kelly and Johns (and a few years later that of Frank Stella) as much as their European contemporaries Lucio Fontana and Yves Klein. Rauschenberg, for instance, had done a series of small square collages with gold and silver leaf in 1953, which he exhibited at the Stable Gallery that year; and he continued through 1956 to use the crumpled foil on roughly textured fabric, a combination that eliminated drawing and gesture and, instead, generated surface and textural incident exclusively from the material’s inherent textual and procedural qualities. Frank Stella, before engaging in his series of large aluminum paintings in 1960 (the square paintings Averroes and Aviceanna, for example), had already produced a group of smaller squarish paintings in 1959, such as Jill (figure 14), which were covered with geometrically ordered, highly reflective metallic tape (as opposed to Rauschenberg’s randomly broken and erratically reflective foil surfaces).

Warhol has explicitly stated that the monochrome paintings of the early to mid-fifties influenced his own decision to paint monochrome panels in the early sixties: “I always liked Ellsworth’s work, and that’s why I always painted a blank canvas. I loved that blank canvas thing and I wished I had stuck with the idea of just painting the same painting like the soup can and never painting another painting. When someone wanted one, you would just do another one. Does anybody do that now? Anyway, you do the same painting whether it looks different or not.”

In spite of Warhol’s typically diffident remarks about the historical references for his use of monochrome panels, his flippancy clearly also indicates his awareness of the distance that separated his conception of the monochrome from that of Kelly, for example.
Recognizing that no single strategy of modernist reduction, of radical negation and refusal, could escape its ultimate fate of enhancing the painting's status as object and commodity, the destruction of any and all metaphysical residue of the device (be it in neoplasticist, Abstract Expressionist, or, as it was identified, hard-edge and color-field painting of the fifties) seems in fact to have been the task that Warhol had set for himself in the deployment of monochromy in the early sixties. It seems possible, therefore, to argue that Warhol's earliest paintings explicitly refer to that venerable legacy, and that paintings such as Yellow Close Cover Before Striking, 1962 (plate 109), or Red Close Cover Before Striking, 1962, perform the same critical inversion with regard to the color-field legacy and the work of Newman, for example, as the Dance Diagrams and the Do It Yourself paintings do with regard to the legacy of Jackson Pollock.

Once again, what makes Warhol's uncompromising negation of that legacy work is the ingenious utilization of an external condition, not the individual assault on a venerated pictorial tradition. It is the contamination of the elusive monochrome with the vulgarity of the most trivial of commonplaces (in this case, the diagrammatic detail of the sulphur strip of a matchbook cover), which makes his work execute the task of destruction so convincingly. As had been the case with his assault on the ritualistic legacy of Abstract Expressionism, Warhol knew early on that this process would eventually dismantle more than just the strategy of the monochrome itself. He realized that any implementation of the monochrome would at this point inevitably lead to a different spatial definition (not to say dissipation) of painting in general, removing it from the traditional conception of a painting as a substantial, unified, integrated planar object whose value and authenticity lie as much in its status as a uniquely crafted object as in its modes of display and the readings ensuing from them. In a little-known 1965 interview Warhol commented on these aspects: "You see, for every large painting I do, I paint a blank canvas, the same background color. The two are designed to hang together however the owner wants. He can hang it right beside the painting or across the room or above or below it... It just makes them bigger and mainly makes them cost more. Liz Taylor, for instance, three feet by three feet, seemed to have shifted between the ritualistic performance of painting (to which Rosenberg's and Kaprow's readings had aspired) and the recognition that his painting had thrived on a profoundly antipainterly impulse. This promise of mechanistic anonymity within the process of pictorial mark-making, however, not only seemed to imply the eventual "destruction" of painting proper (as Kaprow had anticipated as well) but had also brought it (much less dramatically) into historical proximity with the post-Cubist devices of antipainterly strategies and ready-made imagery (a proximity which Pollock himself had reached in such works of 1949 as Out of the Web [Number 7] or Cut Out). If that anti-artistic and anti-authorial promise (and the rediscovery of that promise's historical antecedents) had perhaps not yet been fulfilled in Pollock's own work, then it had certainly become increasingly urgent in the responses that Pollock's work had provoked in Rauschenberg's and Johns's painting of the early to mid-fifties. Rauschenberg, for example, had made this evident as early as c. 1949 in Female Figure (Blueprint) (figure 15), where he rediscovered one of the conventions of ready-made imagery—the immediate (indexical) imprint of the photogram and rayogram—and introduced it into New York School painting. Furthermore, he challenged traditional concepts of authorial authenticity and sublime expressivity in his collaboration with John Cage in 1951 on the Automobile Tire Print, in his Erased de Kooning Drawing in 1953 (figure 16), and most programmatically, of course, in his major assault on painterly presence in the seemingly devaluating and repetitious Factum I (figure 17) and Factum II (figure 18) in 1957. Johns, perhaps even more programmatically, had re-established these parameters not only in his direct-casting methods, which he had derived from Duchamp, but equally in his stenciled, collage, and encaustic paintings since 1954.

One should, therefore, realize that Warhol's apparently scandalous, radical mechanization of pictorial mark-making drew, in fact, on a fully developed tradition, a tradition which ranged from the key figures of New York Dada (Man Ray's Rayograms and Picasso's engineering diagrams) to Rauschenberg's and Johns's work of the early to mid-fifties, where ready-made imagery and indexical mark-making had been rediscovered, and had been inscribed into

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15. Robert Rauschenberg, Female Figure (Blueprint), c. 1949. Monoprint on blueprint paper, 8 3/8" × 36" (266.7 × 91.4 cm). Private collection

in any color you like, with the blank costs $1600. Signed of course."

**READY-MADE IMAGERY**

Warhol's "found" representations and their diagrammatic nature departed from the paradox that the more spontaneous the pictorial mark had become in Pollock's work, the more it had acquired the depersonalized traits of mechanization.

Painterly execution since Pollock, therefore,
the legacy of New York School painting. In light of this range of previously established techniques to apply and repeat mechanically factured pictorial marks, the frequently posed question of whether it was Rauschenberg or Warhol who first used the silkscreen process in painting is utterly futile.

Warhol’s mechanization, at first timid and unresolved in his earliest paintings, which still adhered to the manual gesture, developed from 1960 to 1962 and led from the hand-painted diagrams through the rubber stamps and stencil paintings in 1961–62 to the first fully silkscreened canvases—Baseball, Troy Donahue, Marilyn Monroe, and Elvis Presley—which were shown, along with Dance Diagram (Tango) (plate 161), in his first New York exhibition.

The historical difficulty Rauschenberg and Johns had to overcome was that the preeminence of Abstract Expressionist painting—its definition of mark-making as expressive gestural abstraction—had not only completely obliterated the ready-made imagery and mechanical drawing procedures of Dadaism but had also required that, in order to be “seen” at all in 1954 they had to conform to the locally dominant painterly conventions. Hence, they engaged in pictorializing the radically antipictorial legacy of Dadaism. Clearly, Rauschenberg’s development of his own pictorial bricolage technique—applied in the first dye-transfer drawings such as Cage or Mona Lisa, both 1958, and unfolded as a method subsequently in the monumental cycle Thirty-Four Illustrations for Dante’s Inferno, 1959–60 (figure 19)—had successfully fused both the increasingly dominant presence of mass-cultural imagery with high art and the inherited idiom of Dada collage with the conventions of expressive gestural abstraction. Clearly, therefore, Rauschenberg appeared to fifties audiences as the enigmatic genius of a new age.

What Warhol had to consider in 1962 was whether he too, like his peers, had to remain to some degree within the pictorial format in order to avoid the failed reception that some of Rauschenberg’s own more radical nonpictorial works had encountered, or whether his efforts to depictorialize Johns and Rauschenberg could go as far as the more consequential work of artists such as Kaprow and Robert Watts or European nouveaux réalistes such as Arman. After 1958–59 all of these artists had aban-
doned all gestures of compromise with New York School pictorialism in order to reconstitute radical ready-made strategies; and like their Fluxus colleagues they would ultimately fail to generate interest among a New York audience avidly awaiting the next delivery of pictorial products that could be packaged in collections and exhibitions.\(^\text{39}\) By contrast, Warhol seems at first to have felt reluctant about an outright commitment to mechanical representation and ready-made objects (as had already been evident in his earliest paintings), and as late as 1966 he considered it still necessary to defend his silkscreen technique against the commonly held suspicion that mechanical procedures and ready-made objects were ultimately unartistic and fraudulent: “In my art work, hand painting would take much too long and anyway that’s not the age we’re living in. Mechanical means are today...Silkscreen work is as honest a method as any, including hand painting.”\(^\text{40}\)

But Warhol’s solution, found in 1962, responded to all of these problems: in his painting he isolated, singularized, and centralized representation in the manner of a Duchampian Readymade (and in the manner of Johnn’s Flags and Targets), and extracted it, thereby, from the tiresome affiliation of collage aesthetics and the nagging accusation of neo-Dada, which had been leveled constantly against his older peers. Simultaneously, this strategy, with its increased emphasis on the mere photographic image and its crude and infinite reproducibility, furthered the erosion of the painterly legacy of the New York School and eliminated all traces of the compromises that Rauschenberg had had to make with that legacy. Warhol’s photographic silkscreens of single images as well as the serial repetition of single images eliminated the ambiguity between expressive gesture and mechanical mark from which Rauschenberg’s work had drawn its tension (and its relative conventionality). Also, the centralized ready-made image eliminated the relational composition, which had functioned as the spatial matrix of Rauschenberg’s relatively traditional pictorial structure and temporal narrative. Yet, while seemingly a radical breakthrough, the photographic silkscreen procedure and the compositional strategies of singularization and serial repetition allowed Warhol at the same time to remain within the boundaries of the pictorial framework, a condition of compromise upon which he would always insist.

Warhol’s adaptations of Rauschenberg’s mechanical methods of image transfer (dye or silkscreen) subjected these techniques to numerous critical transformations. First of all, and most obviously, Warhol deprived his paintings of the infinite wealth of associative play and simultaneous multiple references, which Rauschenberg’s traditional collage aesthetic had still offered to the viewer. By contrast, Warhol’s image design (whether in its emblematic single-unit structure or in its repetition of a single unit) extinguishes all poetic resources and prohibits the viewer’s free association of the pictorial elements, replacing the latter with the experience of a confrontational restriction. In a very literal manner Warhol’s singularized images become hermetic: secluded from other images or stilled by their own repetition, they can no longer generate “meaning” and “narration” in the manner of Rauschenberg’s larger syntactic assemblages. Paradoxically, the restriction and hermeticism of the semantically isolated image was at first generally experienced as the effect of absolute banality, or as an attitude of divine indifference, or, worse yet, as an affirmation of consumer culture. In fact it operated, first of all, as the rejection of conventional demands upon the artistic object to provide the plenitude of iconic representation. Warhol negates those demands for a pictorial narrative with the same degree of asceticism with which Duchamp had negated them in his Readymades.

The restriction to the single iconic image/repetition finds its procedural complement in Warhol’s purging all remnants of painterliness from Rauschenberg’s expressively compromised photographic images and in his confronting the viewer with a factual silk-screen reproduction of the photographic image (as in the Elvises, the Disasters, and the Thirteen Most Wanted Men, for example). In these paintings the silkscreened photographic imprint remains the only trace of the pictorial manufacturing process, and this technique assails once again one of the central tenets of the modernist legacy—forcing those eager to rediscover medium-specific painterliness, individuality, and the uniqueness of the painterly mark to detect it in the accidental slippages and flaws of a casually executed silkscreen process. In the following statement, a fervent admirer of Clement Greenberg’s painterly norms, confronted with Warhol’s work, makes a grotesque attempt to regain discursive control and tries to accommodate the blows that the modernist painterly aesthetic had received from Warhol’s propositions: “He [Warhol] can in fact now be seen as the sensitive master of a wide variety of surface incident, and a major effect of the experience of looking at his paintings is an unusually immediate awareness of the two-dimensional fact of their painted surfaces. . . Both factors underline the reality of the paint itself as a deposit on the surface, quite apart from its interdependence with the image it supports.”\(^\text{41}\)

When paint is in fact added manually (as in many of the Marilyn and Liz portraits), it is applied in such a vapid manner, detached from gesture as expression as much as it is dislodged from contour as depiction (both features would become hallmarks of Warhol’s later portrait work) that it increases rather than contradicts the laconic mechanical nature of the enterprise.

Extracting the photographic image from its painterly ambiguity not only brought the mechanical nature of the reproduction to the foreground but also emphasized the lapidary, factual (rather than “artistic” or “poetical”) nature of the image, a quality which seems to have been much more surprising and scandalous to viewers in the early sixties than it is now. Even a critic who in the early sixties was
unusually well acquainted with Duchamp and the Dada legacy seems to have been deceived by the apparent crudity of Pop art's factual imagery: “I find his images offensive; I am annoyed to have to see in a gallery what I'm forced to look at in the supermarket. I go to the gallery to get away from the supermarket, not to repeat the experience.”  

**COMMON ICONOGRAPHY**

Warhol's dialogue with Rauschenberg's work finds its parallel in his critical revisions of the legacy of Jasper Johns. If the emblematic centrality of the single image and the alover serial-grid composition were the key compositional devices that Warhol derived from Johns's Targets and Flags, Alphabets and Numbers, then he certainly insisted on countering the neutral and universal character of Johns's icons with explicit, mass-cultural images instantly recognizable as the real common denominators of collective perceptual experience. In spite of their commonality, Johns's Alphabets and Numbers, Targets and Flags, by comparison with Warhol's imagery suddenly looked arcane and hermetic, and appeared to represent objects remote from everyday experience. By responding to paintings such as Johns's *Flag on Orange Field, II*, 1958 (figure 20), with his emblematic *Gold Marilyn Monroe*, 1962 (plate 199), Warhol made Johns's work seem to be safely entrenched in a zone of unchallenged high-art hegemony. By contrast, his own new mass-cultural iconography of consumption and the portraits of collective scopic prostitution looked suddenly more specific, more concretely American than the American flag itself, perhaps in the way that Édouard Manet’s *Olympia* had appeared more concretely Parisian to the French bourgeois in 1863 than Eugène Delacroix’s *Liberté*.

Warhol's drastically different painterly execution (the chintzy monochrome canvas surface, brushed with cheap gold paint and enhanced with a crudely superimposed, silk-screened single photograph) drew the well-crafted quietism of Johns's paintings into an uncomfortable proximity to mass-cultural glamor and crass vulgarity where their high-art status seemed to disintegrate (if it were not for the irrepressible intimation that Warhol's paintings would soon be redeemed as the masterpieces which heralded an era of high art's own final industrialization).

Several questions remain concerning the status and functions of the photographic imagery silkscreened by Warhol onto his canvases, questions that have been completely obliterated by the sensational effects of Warhol's iconography. In fact, one could say that most of the Warhol (and Pop) literature has merely reiterated the clichés of iconographic reading since the mid-sixties.

The first of these questions concerns the degree to which the sexualization of the commodity and the commodification of sexuality attracted artists, beginning in the early to
mid-fifties. British Pop, in particular, had thrived on juxtapositions of product imagery with (sempornographic) movie-star imagery, and had fused the language of vulgar gossip magazines with that of the idiocy of advertising copy (the most notable examples being Eduardo Paolozzi’s I Was a Rich Man’s Plaything, 1947, or Richard Hamilton’s Just What Is It That Makes Today’s Homes So Different, So Appealing?, 1956.43 It is also in Rauschenberg’s work of the mid- to late fifties that we can find the germination of that iconography and the methods for its display. Warhol’s use of this iconography was prefigured not only in the numerous references to mass cultural consumption in Rauschenberg’s work of the fifties (for example, Coca-Cola Plan, 1958 [figure 21]) but also in the frequent usage of pinup imagery, the serially repeated gossip-column image of Gloria Vanderbilt in Gloria, 1956 (figure 22), or the use of an FBI “wanted” poster in Hymnal, 1955.

Rather than search for the iconographic sources of Warhol’s work, it seems more important to recognize the degree to which postwar consumer culture was a pervasive presence. It appears to have dawned on artists of the fifties that such imagery and objects had irreversibly taken total control of visual representation and public experience. The following exhibition review from 1960 not only indicates that awareness in the work of an artist other than Warhol working at the same time, but also delivers an astonishingly complete and detailed account of the images that Warhol himself subsequently chose as the key figures of his iconographic program: “The show, called ‘Les Lions’ (Boris Lurie, Images of Life, March Gallery, New York, May–June 1960), exciting disturbing nightmares of painting, montages cut out of magazines and newspapers, images of our life held together on canvases with paint ... atom bomb tests [italics mine] and green Salem Cigarette ads... HomeMade Southern Style Instant Frozen Less Work For You Tomato Juice. Obsessively repeated throughout the paintings, girls... Marilyn, Brigitte, Liz and Jayne, the sweet and sticky narcotics that dull the pain... Life Magazine taken to its final ultimate absurd and frightening conclusion, pain and death given no more space and attention than pictures of Elsa Maxwell’s latest party. And all of us spectators at our own death, hovering over it all in narcotized detachment, bored


as gods with The Bomb, yawning over The Election, coming to a stop at last only to linger over the tender dream photos of Marilyn. (And they call it Life).”⁴⁴

How common the concern for these images actually was at the end of the fifties and how plausible and necessary Warhol's iconographic choices were becomes even more evident when looking once again at Kaprow's essay “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock.” In the last two paragraphs, Kaprow predicts almost literally a number of Warhol's actual iconographic types (or, did Kaprow read these types from the same Rauschenberg paintings that Warhol had absorbed?): “Not only will these bold creators show us as if for the first time the world we have always had about us, but ignored, but they will disclose entirely unheard of happenings and events found in garbage cans, police files, hotel lobbies, seen in store windows and on the streets, and sensed in dreams and horrible accidents [italics mine]. . . . The young artist of today need no longer say 'I am a painter' or 'a poet' or 'a dancer.' All of life will be open to him. He will discover out of ordinary things the meaning of ordinariness. He will not try to make them extraordinary. Only their meaning will be stated. But out of nothing he will devise the extraordinary, and then maybe nothingness as well. People will be delighted, or horrified, critics will be confused or amused, but these, I am sure, will be the alchemies of the 1960's.”⁴⁵

In 1963 Warhol juxtaposed the most famous (and common) photographic images of glamorous stars with the most anonymous (and cruel) images of everyday life: photojournalists' images of automobile accidents and suicides (culled from an archive of photographs rejected even by the daily papers for their unbearable horror of detail). In the following year Warhol constructed another dialectic pair of photographic conventions: the police mug shot, from FBI “wanted” posters depicting the Thirteen Most Wanted Men, and the photo-booth picture, in his earliest series of self-portraits (plate 3).⁴⁶

Warhol thus grouped together the photographic conventions that regulate social practices of looking: looking at the Other (in envy at fame and fortune, and in sadistic secresy at catastrophe), and at the disappearing Self (in futuric substitutes). And he articulated the dialectic of the photographic image as social representation with astonishing programmatic clarity: “My death series was divided into two parts, the first one famous deaths and the second one people nobody ever heard of. . . . It's not that I feel sorry for them, it's just that people go by and it doesn't really matter to them that someone unknown was killed. . . . I still care about people but it would be much easier not to care, it's too hard to care.”⁴⁷

In a later interview, in 1972, Warhol described the dialectic of Self and Other in his images of death in terms that would seem to confirm, after all, that an early knowledge of Bertolt Brecht had left its mark on the self-declared indifferent cynic: “Actually you know it wasn't the idea of accidents and things like that, it's just something about, well it all started with buttons, I always wanted to know who invented buttons and then I thought of all the people who worked on the pyramids and then all those, I just always sort of wondered whatever happened to them why aren't they along, so I always thought, well it would be easier to do a painting of people who died in car crashes because sometimes you know, you never know who they are. . . . The people that you know they want to do things and they never do things and they disappear so quickly, and then they're killed or something like that you know, nobody knows about them so I thought well maybe I'll do a painting about a person which you don't know about or something like that.”⁴⁸

Early in 1964 Warhol used a photo-booth auto-portrait as the poster to announce his second individual exhibition in New York (figure 23), and it seems that his simultaneous attraction to both the anonymous mug shot and the photo-booth portrait originated in the automatic photographer's achievement of destroying the last remnants of specialized artistic vision. Paradoxically, while denying the validity of manual skill and technical expertise, the photo-booth picture concretized (however grotesquely) the growing need for collective representation and made that instant representation universally accessible. In the automatic portraits of the photo booth the “author” of the picture had, in fact, finally become a machine (Warhol's frequently stated desire).

The systematic devaluation of the hierarchies of representational techniques corresponds to the abolition of the hierarchy of subjects worth while representing, as Warhol's most famous dictum makes clear: “In the future everybody will be famous for fifteen minutes.” It was only logical that Warhol sent the first patrons to commission their own portraits to the photo booth, as the accounts of Ethel Seull (plate 325) and Holly Solomon (figure 24) testify.

While Warhol constructed images of Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and Elvis Presley that refer to the tragicomical conditions of their existence in glamor, the lasting fascination of these paintings does not originate in the myth of these figures but in the fact that Warhol constructed their images from the perspective of the tragic condition of those who consume the stars' images: “I made my earliest films using for several hours just one actor on the screen doing the same thing: eating or sleeping or smoking: I did this because people usually just go to the movies to see only the star, to eat him up, so here at last is a chance to look only at the star for as long as you like no matter what he does and to eat him up all you want to. It was also easier to make.”⁴⁹

The dialectic of spectacle-culture and collective compulsion, revealing in every image that glamor is only the stunning reflex of collective scopical fixation, permeates Warhol's entire oeuvre. It culminates in his films, which operate in the movie theater as real-time experience during an expanded viewing time as a deconstruction of the audience's participation in that compulsion; at the same time they operate on the screen as instances of collective enablement, grotesque and deranged as the agents of